

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
HABITAT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE
HABITAT ENHANCEMENT AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL**

Game Branch / HPC Project Number: 12-312

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: Helicopter Time for Pronghorn Capture GMU 19A/B

Region and Game Management Unit: GMU 19A/B in Region 3

Local Habitat Partnership Committee (LHPC):

- SEAZ-HPC

Was the project presented to the LHPC?

YES[X] NO[]

Has this project been submitted in previous years? YES[] NO[X]

If Yes, was it funded? YES[] NO[] → **Funded HPC Project #(s):**

Project Type: Antelope Capture/Augmentation

Brief Project Summary: Erect corral trap, use helicopter to drive pronghorn into corral, and transport pronghorn to release sites in 35A/B.

Big Game Wildlife Species to Benefit: Pronghorn Antelope

Implementation Schedule (Month/Day/Year):

Project Start Date: November 2012

Project End Date: February 2013

Environmental Compliance:

NEPA Completed: Yes[] No[] N/A[X]

Projected Completion Date: _____

State Historic Preservation Office - Archaeological Clearance:

Yes[] No[] N/A[X]

Projected Completion Date: _____

Arizona Game and Fish Department EA Checklist: N/A[]

To be Completed by: Arizona Game and Fish Department

Projected Completion Date: February 28, 2012

PROJECT FUNDING

Special Big Game License Tag Funds Requested:

\$ 10,000

Cost Share or Matching Funds:

\$ 11,041

Total Project Costs:

\$ 21,041

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Applicant (please print):

Matt Braun

Address: 555 N. Greasewood Rd.

Tucson, AZ 85745

E-mail:

mbraun@azgfd.gov

Telephone: 623-237-1821

Date: August 30th, 2012

AGFD Contact and Phone No. (If applicant is not AGFD personnel):

Project has been coordinated with: Arizona Antelope Foundation, AZGFD Game Branch, Babocarmi Ranch, Vaca Ranch, BLM, US Forest Service

NEED STATEMENT – PROBLEM ANALYSIS:

Historically, as many as 122 antelope have been surveyed in 35A/B with survey numbers remaining consistent in the 70s and 80s. The 2012 surveyed population of pronghorn antelope in GMU 35A/B is 68 animals in two areas; (8 in the San Rafael Valley and 60 in the Elgin Area). Only 5 bucks were surveyed in 2012 (1 in the San Rafael Valley and 4 in the Elgin area). With the exception of 2012, no more than 3 fawns have survived to adulthood since 2008. The fixed-wing surveys in both areas were confirmed for the past two years by ground surveys conducted by AGFD personal, retired AZGFD biologists, and volunteers. Over the past five years, numbers have diminished to as few as 25 surveyed in 2011. Drought, human encroachment, habitat fragmentation, and fawn predation are likely the cause of the decrease. Due to lack of recruitment and low population numbers, genetic bottlenecks are likely occurring and reducing herd vitality.

This augmentation will be a part of a bigger Pronghorn Management Plan for the area in which work has already begun on the ground. In the spring of 2012, over of a mile fence separating pronghorn habitat on Fort Huachuca and the Babocomari Ranch was made pronghorn friendly. A contract coyote hunter was contracted to remove coyotes during the fawning season. A total of 23 coyotes were removed during this period of time in 35A/B. Ten to fifteen additional coyotes were removed by sportsmen and AGFD personal in the project area during the spring 2012. This with the help of a very good monsoon in 2012 has resulted in 20 fawns surviving in the Elgin area of the project at the time of the survey flight in early August.

Augmenting these populations, will improve the genetic diversity and vitality of both herds. This augmentation will also ensure the survival of the San Rafael herd. This herd is isolated from other herds in the US and Mexico due to the “Normandy-style” border fence and mountain ranges surrounding the valley. There is no immigration/emigration to or from the San Rafael Valley. The one and only buck in this herd is old and at the time of the 2012 survey flight was having difficulty keeping up with the herd.

In the past few years, the Sonoita-Elgin community has grown, fragmenting the once contiguous grassland habitat. A major state highway, Highway 82, cuts through the pronghorn habitat. Increased traffic in recent years and the general limitations due to fence and road barriers have restricted the pronghorn from crossing major highways, reducing the movement of genetic material of the Elgin herd from the larger Las Cienegas herd in GMU 34B. Adding genetic diversity to the Elgin herd will be extremely beneficial to this population until modifications can be made to reduce restrictions to movements between GMU’s 35A and 34B.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

1) Using a helicopter, drive into corral trap or net gun up to 80 pronghorn Antelope in Chino Valley, Arizona(GMU19A/B), transport them, and release in GMU 35A/B

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND STRATEGIES:

A corral trap will be set up in late fall/early winter on a site selected by AZGFD personal along with the help of a Utah biologist. Trap setup will be completed sometime in January followed by two consecutive days using a helicopter to drive antelope into the corral trap.

Antelope captured will be examined by a Department Veterinarian, all animals will be inoculated for various ungulate diseases, and loaded into a livestock trailer. Antelope will be transported to the two release sites in GMU 35A and 35B and released the following morning. Approximately half of the pronghorn captured will be released in the San Rafael Valley on the Vaca Ranch and the remaining animals will be released on the Babocomari Ranch's West Pasture on the east side of Highway 83. (see map)

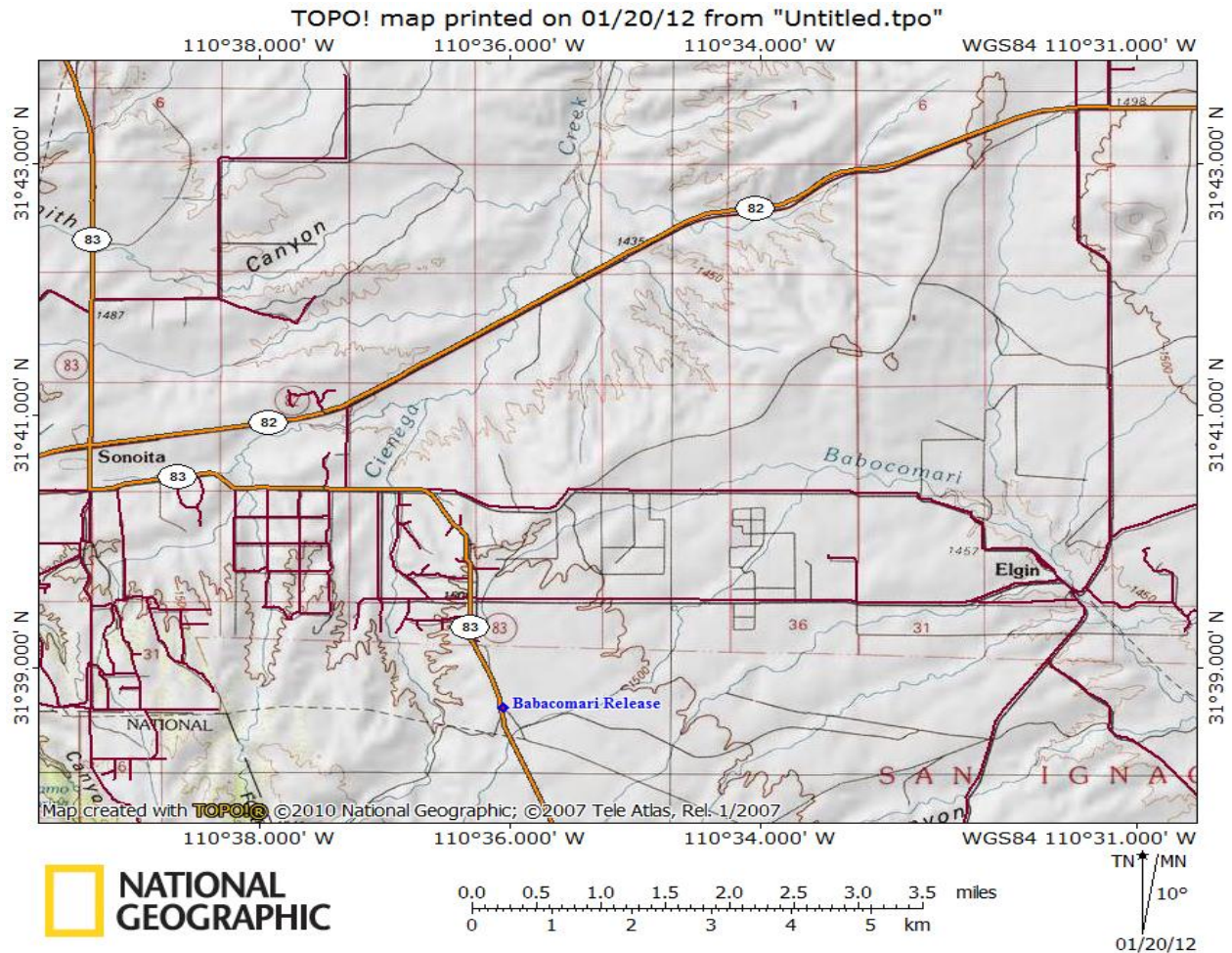
PROJECT LOCATION:

Caputre Locations:

Chino Valley in Game Management Units 19A/B.

Elgin Release Site:

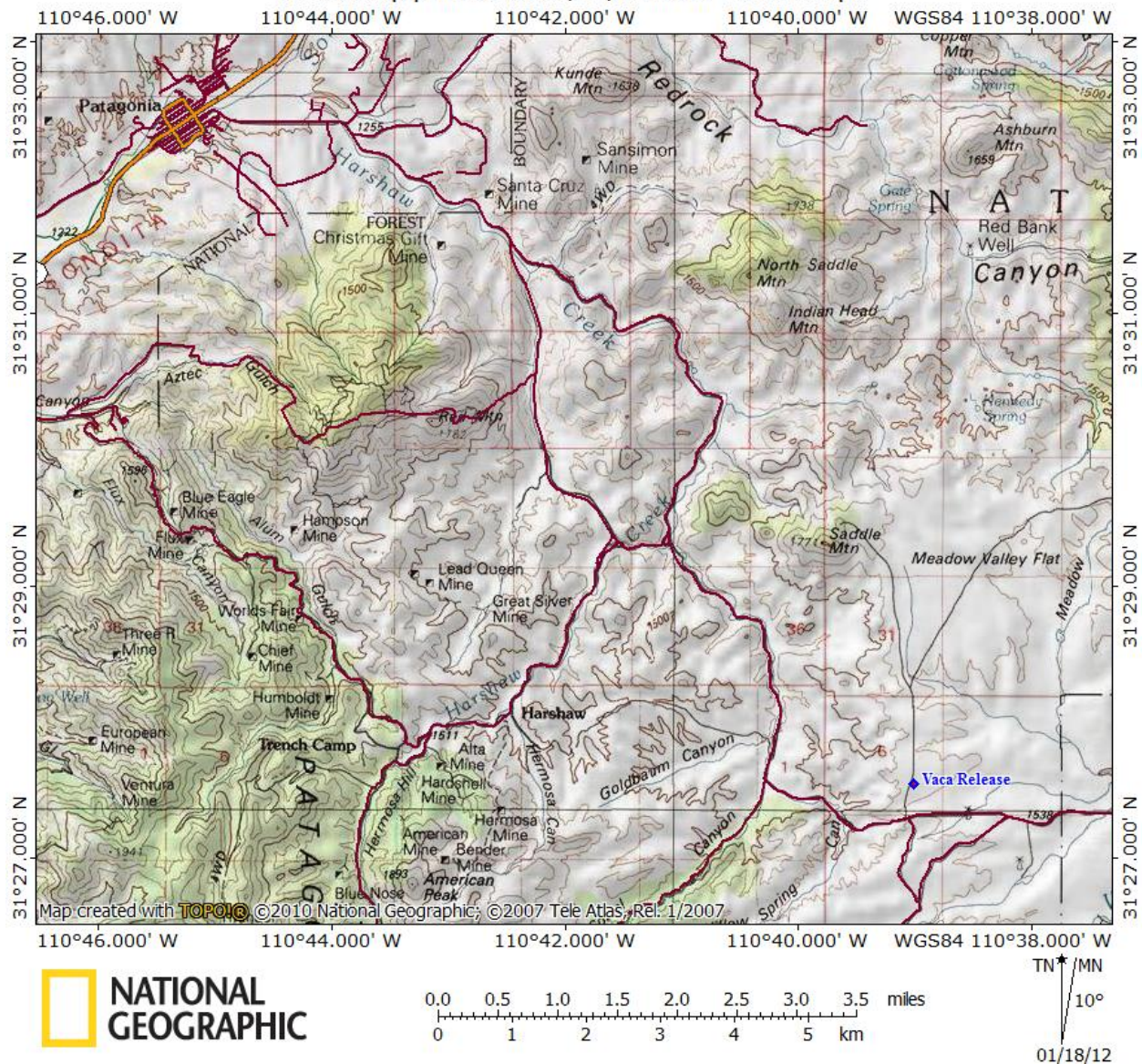
From Tucson: Take I-10 east. Exit Hwy 83 south to Sonoita. Continue south on Hwy 83 through Sonoita. The release site will be approximately one mile south of the Elgin School. There will be a small gate on the east side of the highway.



San Rafael Release Site:

From Tucson: Take I-10 east. Exit Hwy 83 south to Sonoita. Turn west on Hwy 82 to Patagonia. Turn left at the Post Office in Patagonia, and then make a left at the T-intersection. Follow the main road until it turns into the Harshaw Rd. When the pavement makes a sharp right turn, a graded dirt road will continue straight with a San Rafael Valley sign. Take the graded dirt road approximately 4.25 miles to the Meadow Valley Rd (FS 165). Turn North towards meadow valley, and the release site will be just beyond the first green gate.

TOPO! map printed on 01/18/12 from "Untitled.tpo"



LAND OWNERSHIP AT THE PROJECT SITE(S):

(if the project area is private property, please state specifically and provide the landowner's name)

San Rafael Landowners:

Bob Hudson - Vaca Ranch

Elgin Landowners:

Ben Brophy - Babocomari Ranch

IF PRIVATE PROPERTY, IS THERE A COOPERATIVE BIG GAME STEWARDSHIP or LANDOWNER AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE LANDOWNER AND THE DEPARTMENT?

YES[X] NO[] N/A[]

HABITAT DESCRIPTION:

Release Location

Both grassland areas described in the proposal consist of gentle rolling hills bisected by small cuts and riparian areas to include the Santa Cruz River and the Babocomari River drainages forming the most prominent riparian habitats. The surrounding grasslands are dominated by blue grama, with tobosa, three-awn, and side oats grama. Shrub species diversity includes cat claw, whitethorn acacia, false mesquite, yucca, cholla and prickly pear cactus species, with invasive mesquite and Manzanita, cedar and juniper species in the transitional breaks in adjacent habitat.

ITEMIZED USE OF FUNDS:

Special Big Game License Tag Funds

Helicopter 2 hours ferry = \$1300

Helicopter 8.5 hours capture = \$8075

Fuel truck mileage = \$625

Total =\$10,000

Cost Share or Matching Funds (for volunteer labor rates please refer to the worksheet below)

Volunteer Labor (480 hours X \$21.69) = **\$10,411.**

Volunteer Miles (30 X 150 miles = 4500 miles X 14 cents) = **\$630**

LIST COOPERATORS AND DESCRIBE POTENTIAL PARTICIPATION:

Arizona Game and Fish Department: Game and Research Branches – Technical advice, project planning, coordination, project monitoring and financial contribution

Arizona Antelope Foundation – Technical advice and support, funding partner

SCI-Tucson Chapter – Project support and funding partner

USFS; Sierra Vista Ranger District – Project support and potential partner in the future Pronghorn Management Plan

BLM-Sierra Vista Office – Project Support and potential partner in the future Pronghorn Management Plan

Research Ranch – Project support and potential partner in the future Pronghorn Management Plan

Department of Defense; Fort Huachuca Military Installation – Project support, potential funding and partner in the future Pronghorn Management Plan

Santa Cruz and Hereford NRCDC – Project support and potential funding partner

Private Landowners/Lessee – Project support: listed below

San Rafael Contacts:

Bob Hudson - Vaca Ranch

Zay Hartigan - Ki He Kah Ranch

Bud Bercich

Elgin Contacts:

Ben Brophy - Babocomari Ranch

Rukin Jelks III – Diamond C Ranch

Bill Brake/Al Wilcox - Rose Tree Ranch

Bill Shrock - Elgin

WOULD IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PROJECT ASSIST IN PROVIDING, MAINTAINING, OR FACILITATING RECREATIONAL ACCESS?

YES[] NO[X] N/A[]

PROJECT MONITORING PLAN:

GPS Radio Collars have already been purchased through HPC funds last cycle. These collars were intended to go on pronghorn caught in spring of 2012. These 15 collars will be distributed evenly between the pronghorn release in the San Rafael and Elgin areas. The collared animals will be monitored as determined in the coordinated monitoring plan to be developed by AZGFD Game and Research Branches. The monitoring plan will provide all data collection details to be used to identify negative limitation/effects impacting the populations to include predation and survivability, special distribution, movements, and habitat needs. This will offer the Wildlife Program research options to include student internship and Department volunteer opportunity. All options will be identified and evaluated regarding data collection that will be beneficial in the future management of the two populations in addition to other southeastern Arizona populations.

All GPS collars will be recovered by AGFD for future use if animal mortalities occur.

Standard summer and early fall surveys will be conducted to assess fawn:doe ratios as well as total pronghorn antelope observed.

Annual AZGFD Pronghorn surveys and employee, sportsmen and landowner personal observations will be recorded.

PROJECT MAINTENANCE:

N/A

PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT TO BE FILED BY:

Matt Braun